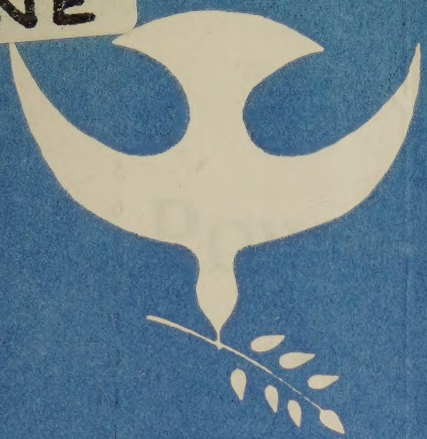


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The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

MARCH 1991

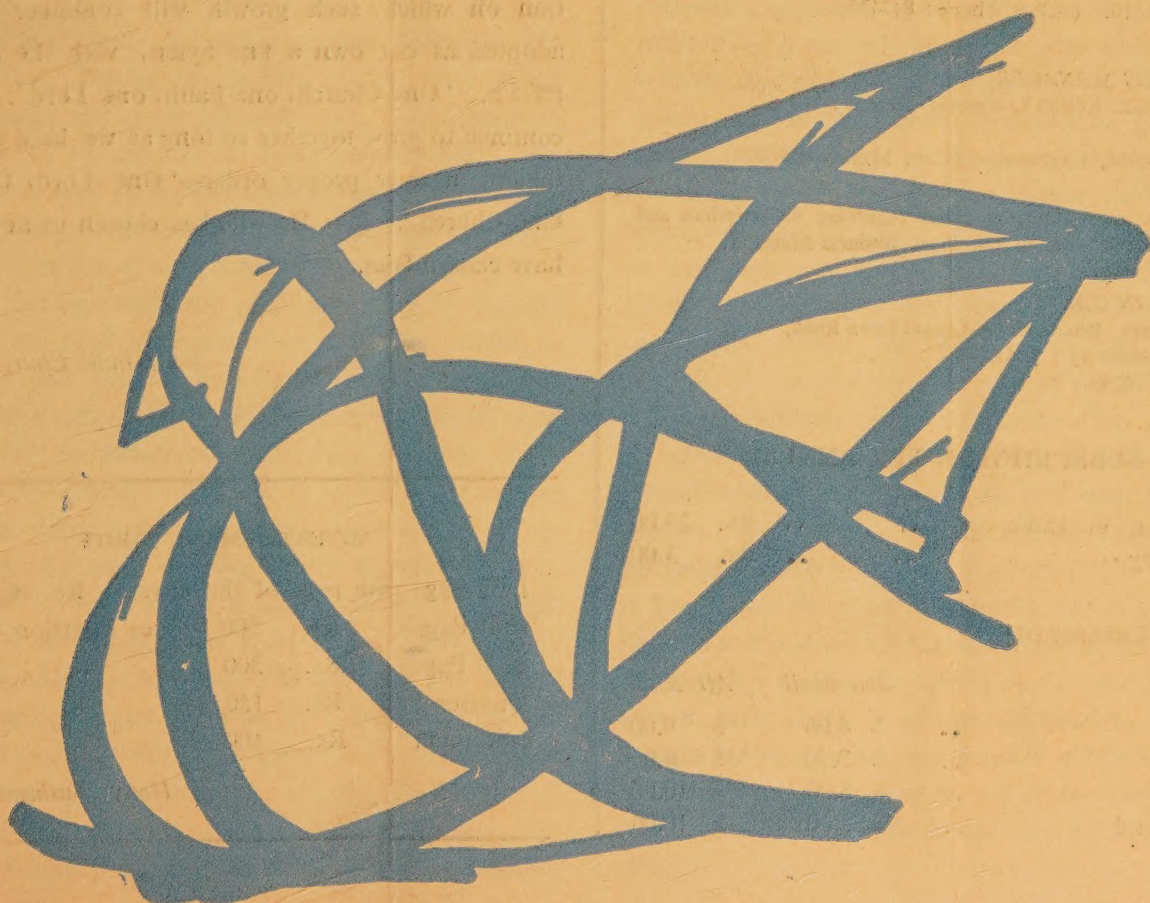
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‘EASTER BLESSINGS’

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Opinions expressed by contributors do not commit the C.S.I.

The South India¹ CHURCHMAN

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MARCH 1991

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25 Years Ago!

Is the Church in this Diocese growing together? Sure it is. A church loyal to its pledge of comprehensions being served with increasing effectiveness through a progressively integrated administration. There is one condition on which such growth will continue. We have adopted as our own a fine hymn, with the continuing refrain, 'One Church, one Faith, one Lord'. We shall continue to grow together so long as we hold these great themes in their proper order—'One Lord, One Faith, One Church'. It is He who has chosen us not we who have chosen Him.

—South India Churchman 1966

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The Power of Resurrection



The foundation for Christianity is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Of course, it is only when the cross is taken with the Resurrection that it becomes Gospel and the centre of Christianity. Resurrection is more than the sequence to the crucifixion. We begin with the belief that Jesus is the Son of God and so, for us, there is no surprise when we read on from the penultimate to the final chapter of the Gospels. But to the disciples the Resurrection was the biggest jolt of their lives, and of their times. They saw Jesus now in a totally new and unexpected dimension—that of the divine. During His earthly life they had thought of Him, sometimes as the Messiah or the Christ, but never as the Lord of the universe, as being one with God. They were overwhelmed by the spontaneous realisation that this man they had known as love and kindness was none other than the divine son of God someone inseparable from God. It meant that love and faith could no longer be regarded merely as the path of obedience or resignation leading to humiliation and suffering as with Jeremiah or even with their crucified master, but as the power behind the universe. That was why the Resurrection was truly incredible unless we saw it for oneself. We tend to stop at the Cross—a humiliating death, perhaps winning sympathy for Jesus. The hymns and songs we sing amply suggest this, but, although the Cross is real it is not an end by itself. Resurrection is the result of the cross—both, the Death and the Resurrection go together. Thomas, who was dubbed the doubting Thomas, (as if we don't doubt), did right to doubt, in a way; for this was a matter in which one should not allow oneself to be fooled by the possible illusions of even one's best friends. Thomas felt instinctively that the Resurrection, if it was true, would demand a complete

revolution of one's world-view, the philosophy by which one should live and die. Eventually, the Resurrection did mean all that and more to Thomas; for, when the Risen Lord appeared to him he went even farther than the other disciples in his response when he cried, 'My Lord and My God.'

To the other disciples too the Resurrection was an overwhelming experience. The crucifixion had left them bewildered and it was only the Resurrection that enabled them to understand what had been happening on the cross and to redeem it from the tragedy of weakness, perplexity and waste. It also brought to them a new hope and vision, a new world-view. This new world-view, however, had a shattering effect on them. It shattered their old selves of sin and pride and also their former prejudices and sub-Christian attitudes. It had transformed them into a new community. Indeed, the Resurrection was the starting point for all the disciples, the take-off for all their several different adventures of faith and love. Peter embarked on his adventure of practical discovery that God loved even Roman soldiers and that what He had made could not be unclean. One of the 'sons of thunder' was to become the gentle apostle of peace and goodwill who said, 'God is love.' And the greatest shattering was to take place on the road to Damascus when a man breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the Church would make his encounter with the Risen Lord. To all these disciples the Resurrection brought the assurance of the triumph of love over evil and the conviction that to follow the way of Jesus and to continue His work on earth would be the most blessed destiny for them.

We have to regain this power of the Resurrection. Christians, especially as a body have not so whole-heartedly responded to the challenge of Easter. It is true that many of us, as individuals or groups, have tried to work out the implications of Easter for our own spiritual growth. Many of us have been content to remain in the shadow of the cross. Mere piety is irrelevant even as mere human goodwill is powerless for doing the things and building the society

which, in God's plan, will bring us the blessings that the eye has not seen, nor the ear heard. Only Divine Power released on the Pentecost, the Holy Spirit, working as love, faith and Hope in people willing to risk their all for God, can take us along the road to the Kingdom of God. Easter brings us this perpetual challenge of Christ to accept His power and with it to work in partnership with Him.

—DASS BABU

Australian Post-Office Issues Stamp to Commemorate Assembly

The Australian postal services have given their stamp of approval to the World Council of Churches Seventh Assembly. Australian Post has prepared a pre-stamped envelope which has two embossed logos. One is the 'oikoumene' symbol, where the stamp is usually stuck on, and the other is the symbol of the Assembly. The envelope went on sale on the opening day of the Assembly and will be available at post-offices until the end of June.

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Applications invited for the post of :

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CHRIST IS RISEN

BISHOP P. VICTOR PREMASAGAR, *Moderator*

Easter Day brings new hope to the whole world. Jesus who died upon the Cross shattered the hopes of disciples, who had expected Him to establish the Messianic Kingdom but, alas, He was crucified, died and was buried on Good Friday.

On Easter day, women went to the grave brought the news that Jesus had risen. Jesus appeared to the women, disciples in the upper room, on the way to Emmaus, on the shores of Galilee and on the mountain top. The disciples were filled with hope, when they saw the risen Christ. Resurrection appearances of Jesus were to His disciples, who had followed him and known him. They recognised Jesus as He broke the bread, and showed the marks of His wounds in His hands and His side. The Risen Lord, as St. John records in his Gospel, appeared to the disciples, He greeted them with the words, 'Peace be unto you . . . ' and said to them, 'As my Father has sent Me even so I send you,' and He breathed on them the Holy Spirit. The disciples were empowered to be witnesses to His life, death and resurrection.

The Risen Christ appeared to St. Paul and to his people down the centuries in every generation, bringing new hope, empowering them to proclaim good news to all people. The unity of CSI is in obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and to the prayer of Jesus in the upper room that they all may be one and that the world may come to know him through their unity.

Easter brings same challenges to us as to the disciples. He offers us His peace. We recognise the marks of His wounds for us through the death upon the cross and He sends us out to be His witnesses to our people and to the whole world.

The power of the resurrection and the power of Holy Spirit, gathered the believers into a fellowship, caring for

one another, sharing with others the good news and serving those who are in need. The Church of South India through its thousands of congregations is given this power of resurrection and the power of Holy Spirit, to bring hope and share the good news with all our people especially with the poor, the oppressed and the disabled.

I would like to suggest three important things for us on this Easter day.

- (i) Because Jesus has risen from the dead, we too who believe in Him will rise from the dead.
- (ii) 'Christ the Lord is risen' today ! Hallelujah.
Sons of men and angels say ; Hallelujah !
Raise your joy and triumph high, Hallelujah !
Sing, ye heavens ! and earth, reply, Hallelujah !
(Charles Wesley)

Resurrection brings new hope to the human communities and the whole nature. John the seer, saw the new heaven and the new earth, a new beginning and a new future opened for all humankind and the whole universe. God will indeed be light to His people and He will wipe their tears, death will be no more, for God Himself will be their refuge. (Rev. 21.1-6)

- (iii) As the Risen Christ breathed His Spirit upon His disciples, the Holy Spirit will empower us in fulfilling God's Mission today. The Holy Spirit leads His church to new areas of mission. The Kingdom of God is always associated with the strengthening of the poor and the oppressed, the outcaste and the discriminated in our community.

May the power of Resurrection enable us to take this message of hope to all our people.

Growth Toward Unity

DR. HEINZ—JOACHIM HELD, *Moderator, WCC*

Clarifying controversial theological and ecclesiological questions is not the only way to foster growth towards unity, the moderator of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, Heinz-Joachim Held (Evangelical Church, Germany) told the council's Seventh Assembly on Monday (11 February).

Another way to strengthen links is by ecumenical visits, he said. And while plans to initiate a process of regular ecumenical visits among member churches had proven to be impossible, he commended the Central Committee and Executive Committee for holding many of their meetings outside Geneva since the Vancouver assembly in 1983.

In his report to the assembly, covering 1983-1991, Held also indicated that common services of prayer among churches have helped with unity, especially when praying for sister churches that were witnessing in difficult situations. Examples included prayers for an end to apartheid in South Africa in 1986, for freedom and independence in Namibia in 1987, for the reunification of Korea in 1989, and for justice and peace in the Middle East in 1990.

Emphasising the importance of the ecumenical sharing of resources, he urged that a fellowship of mutual sharing be maintained and constantly developed.

Held stressed the strong ecumenical interest in environmental issues, recalling that this first came to the assembly in Nairobi in 1975. It was noted that the WCC often addresses problems early which later become the concern of much of the world.

He referred to the call from the Vancouver assembly for a concentration on theological work, to 'develop a vital and coherent theology'. He admitted that it was not clear just what this is, but that he personally thinks the crucial concern is 'the relation between theology and life'. At a preceding press conference, Held and Lois Wilson (United, Canada), one of the WCC's seven presidents, discussed emerging theologies. Wilson commented that she believed 'the sharing of the eucharist may come from suffering, developing countries rather than through statements. We'll see.'

Highlighting the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry document, Held told the assembly that it 'demonstrates our growth in mutual understanding and our ability to reach at least an intermediate stage in common convictions'. When asked at the press conference about relations with the Catholic Church, Held noted that the Catholic Church had responded to BEM—the first time it had responded officially to any WCC document. 'That in itself is progress', he said.

Held expressed the hope that all churches which participate actively in the ecumenical movement might agree that, even where eucharistic fellowship and full communion are not yet achieved, nevertheless forms of communion do exist. The churches are no longer living in isolation from each other, but 'have developed mutual understanding and respect'.

Held's report also highlighted the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity With Women, indicating that the decade 'is slowly gaining an entry in the churches and attention is being drawn to discrimination against women in society'.

(Contd. from p. 7)

The Government and the new building

The encouragement given by the borough and the Government at Westminster and the Government of India was remarkable. The attitude of the Government of India and the High Commissioners in succession was very helpful. The first High Commissioner, Mr. V. K. Krishna Menon took a lively interest in the work and welfare of the students. He laid the foundation on May 5, 1950. The new building was opened on March 24, 1953 by the Indian High Commissioner Mr. B. G. Kher.

The Hostel Extension Scheme

The 55 bedroom cum common rooms institution had hardly been in operation for three years when the Committee began to think of expansion either along Fitzroy Street or along Grafton Way. Both these plots belonged to the University College. Sir Francis Low continued his negotiations with Sir Douglas Logan. In June 1959 the University College informed that 57, 59 and 61 Grafton Way would be sold to the YMCA for £4225. The final plan of the hostel extension was submitted to the Committee by Mr. Tubbs in September 20,

1960. There was a provision for 54 students in all. 'It was agreed that the basement, ground floor and the first floor be reserved for women students with provision for 16 beds. The foundation stone had been laid by Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, the then Indian High Commissioner on May 26, 1960. The New Wing was opened in January 1962 by Mr. T. N. Kaul, the Acting High Commissioner for India.

Future of the YMCA Indian Student Hostel

I believe that the YMCA INDIAN Student Hostel has been doing a yeoman service to hundreds of students coming from India for higher studies. It is better that it branches out its services to places like Manchester, Birmingham, Eastham etc. where Indian communities are predominant. The Indian YMCA should think of welfare activities to Indian communities. At present we are not working with the communities. If we start some welfare work to Indian and other communities, that will be a fulfilment of the work started here in 1920.

May God help us to continue and expand His Kingdom through YMCA work.

Chinese Churches can carry on, Despite 'Tightening Up'



Since the Chinese government's crackdown on demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in June 1989, 'there has been some tightening up of things', and 'religion is not unaffected,' Bishop K. H. Ting, president of the China Christian Council, told a group of visitors to the World Council of Churches Seventh Assembly (13 February) in Canberra.

'But the gains of 10 years of liberalisation can't be swept away all at once,' he said. 'We feel there is still space for the churches to carry on.'

The past decade has seen an easing of the problem of 'equating religion with opium with all its unhappy connotations,' Bishop Ting said, commenting that now religion is studied as it is and not just through a few Marxist dogmas.

Bishop Ting and two of his colleagues—Han Wen-Zao, director of the Amity Foundation, and Shen Yi-Fan, one of two new post-denominational bishops in the Chinese Protestant Church, addressed an audience that nearly filled the worship tent and that greeted them with a standing ovation. The worship tent on the campus of the Australian National University is capable of holding 3000 to 4000 people.

'This is the first time after 43 years that we three Chinese Christians have come to a WCC assembly,' Bishop Ting said.

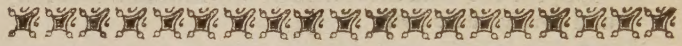
The three church leaders detailed the rapid growth of Christianity since the 'complete isolation and deprivation' of the 10-year Cultural Revolution ended in 1979, noting also such problems as a severe shortage of ministers. About 1000 ordained ministers serve five to six million Protestants, Bishop Ting said. 'We are a small, struggling minority of less than one per cent' of China's (1.1 billion) population', he said. 'If the western churches are struggling to keep a foot in the centre, we in China are struggling to hold our place at the margin.'

Bishop Ting traced the development of the Three-Self Movement, establishing the Chinese church as self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. This independence should be seen as 'the fruitior, not negation' of the more than 100 years of foreign mission in China, he said.

Six thousand church buildings are now open for public worship, and tens of thousands of groups of Christians are meeting in homes. These house meetings are 'probably going to be an important mark of Chinese Christianity,' Ting said.

The Amity Foundation, an independent, voluntary organization formed in 1985 at the initiative of Chinese Christians, has programmes in health, education and cultural service and development. Its goals include 'contributing to China's social development and openness to the outside world,' said Han.

Since the foundation's press was established in December 1987, more than 2.5 million copies of the Bible and New Testament have been produced. Daily production of Bibles is now between 5000 and 6000 copies. The Chinese church wants contact with the church universal, that is why the China Christian Council wants WCC membership. 'We hope by the end of this Assembly our membership status could be recognized', he said. (EPS)



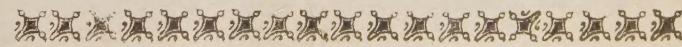
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World Council of Churches

Functions and Brief History

The World Council of Churches was formally inaugurated 23 August 1948 at its First Assembly, in Amsterdam. Its constitution describes it as a 'fellowship of churches (now 311) which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.'

The constitution specifies seven WCC 'functions and purposes', including to :

- 'call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship expressed in worship and in common life in Christ';
- 'facilitate the common witness of the churches';
- 'support the churches in their worldwide missionary and evangelistic task';
- 'express the common concern of the churches in the service of human need, the breaking down of barriers between people, and the promotion of one human family in justice and peace'; and
- 'foster the renewal of the churches in unity, worship, mission, and service.'

The WCC groups denominations in more than 100 countries from virtually all Christian traditions—Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Old Catholic, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, United, Independent (Lord Aladura, African, Israel Nineveh, African Holy Spirit, Assyrian, Hussite, Kimbanguist, Mar Thoma and Philippine), Reformed (including also Waldensian, Remonstrant, Mission Covenant, Congregational, and Presbyterian),

Anglican, Disciples, Brethren, Moravian, Pentecostal, Quaker, and Mennonite.

Among traditions outside WCC membership are Roman Catholicism, Seventh-day Adventism and the Salvation Army. They do belong, however, to some national and/or regional Christian councils. The Salvation Army has a fraternal relationship as a world confessional body.

At the staff level, the Vatican and the WCC cooperate in various ways. In addition, a Vatican-WCC Joint Working Group meets annually, and the Vatican appoints some members of the WCC Commission on Faith and Order. Roughly a quarter of the WCC staff belongs to the Roman Catholic Church.

About 300 people work at WCC headquarters in Geneva. Located there are its 14 programme sub-units : Faith and Order ; World Mission and Evangelism ; Dialogue with People of Living Faiths ; Church and Society ; Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service ; Programme to Combat Racism ; Christian Medical Commission ; International Affairs ; Churches' Participation in Development ; Renewal and Congregational Life ; Youth ; Women ; Theological Education ; and Education. Located nearby, at Chateau Bossey, is the WCC Ecumenical Institute.

After Amsterdam, WCC assemblies met in Evanston (near Chicago, 1954), New Delhi (1961), Uppsala (1968), Nairobi (1975), Vancouver (1983) and Canberra (1991).

The Central Committee has 158 members. It meets every 12 to 18 months. Prof. George Koshy, the CSI General Secretary, was elected to the Central Committee for a period of 7 years.



Y.M.C.A. Indian Student Hostel

Mr. K. MUTHIAN, London*

Shakespeare Hut

The Y.M.C.A. Indian Student Hostel is the fruit of the good war work done by the Indian Y.M.C.A. Secretaries. The Shakespeare Hut was a group of huts in Keppel Street off Gower Street, which belonged to the British YMCAs. The English YMCA was doing excellent service for their men who came from the battlefields. When K. T. Paul and Dr. S. K. Dutta decided to venture out in the service of Indian Students, the British YMCA was too glad to place the Shakespeare Hut at their disposal. It was so called because the land belonged to the Shakespeare Society, who charged us a ground rent of £3000 per annum. After some alterations, the place was developed to have 100 beds of which most of them were put in cubicles. There was a restaurant where 150 people could sit and have a meal, and a lecture hall with a capacity of 700. The National Council spent £8000 to make the place suitable and promised an annual subsidy of £1500.

K. T. Paul

Mr. K.T. Paul was the founder of this institution. On Thursday 20th October 1919 at 117 Victoria Street there met a group of dedicated Christian leaders. After prayer by Mr. Joe Callan, K.T. Paul was asked to take the chair. This was the first recorded meeting at which the objects and scope of the institution which they were about to start were clearly spelt out.

K.T. Paul was the General Secretary of the Indian National Council of YMCA's from 1918 to 1930. He was the founder member of the National Missionary Society and became its Organising Secretary. He took active part in the organisation of the South India United Church in 1909 and later became its President. He coined the expression 'Rural Reconstruction' and started Rural Demonstration Centres under the auspices of the YMCA. He was a pioneer and an outstanding leader. He died in 1931.

Sir Arthur Yapp

K. T. Paul's dream of starting this institution would not have been realised but for the goodwill and assistance given to him by the British leader Sir Arthur Yapp. Sir M. N. Chatterjee was the first Warden. Sir Arthur Yapp was one of those who believed that English men had a great deal to learn from India. He felt that an institution of this type would be helpful. 'During the darkest times of war, India came to our help. I do not know what we would have done otherwise without that help that was given so ungrudgingly', he said.

* Mr. K. Muthian is the General Secretary of the Indian YMCA, London. He hails from the Diocese of Madurai-Ramnad.

Shakespeare Hut was formally opened on February 4 1920 by the orientalist, poet and critic, Lawrence Binyon. There was to be a committee of management, the members of which were to be appointed by the Indian National Council of YMCAs. The Committee in London may nominate members and send up their names to the Indian National Council for formal acceptance. Mr. Edwyn R. Bevan was the first Chairman for 10 years. He was a Greek scholar on the teaching staff of King's College London. Several lectures, participated by intellectuals, were arranged. Mr. H. A. L. Fisher chaired for Rabindranath Tagore and Lord Haldane chaired for Gilbert Murray.

Dr. Radhakrishnan's Opinion

In 1936 Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, who later became President of the Republic of India, was the guest of honour at the Annual Dinner. During his speech he said :

' My first night in this country was spent in this hostel. No longer did I feel a stranger ; I felt that I had moved from home to home. To the new arrival the hostel makes the transition more or less a gradual one and for that must be very thankful. This organisation is thus fulfilling a very real need. '

Mahatma Gandhi was given a rousing reception in 1931 when he came for the Round Table Conference. In 1938 Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit were present at an India League Function in the YMCA premises.

The Students and the New Building

While the Committee of Management was considering the Fitzroy Square site given as an alternate site in exchange for the Gower Street property, the student representatives were strongly against accepting the offer of the University. The main reason was that during those early post-war years, the area round Fitzroy Square was full of pimps and prostitutes. When the Committee decided to accept the Fitzroy Square site, the student representatives voted against the proposal. The Chairman of the Committee wrote to the Commissioner of Police in December 1952 to take the necessary steps to prevent any student problem.

The residents came into conflict with the non-resident members within the Union. The non-residents were in a majority. The conflict came to a head in 1964. The Committee then resolved to consider this institution primarily as a *Student Hostel* and wound up the Indian Students' Union.

(Contd. on p. 4)

Inter-religious Dialogue

1. 'When you have crossed the river it is foolish to carry the raft on your back': this is what the Buddha taught us about carrying with us that which hinders our journey', said a Buddhist participant at the Multifaith Consultation called by the WCC in Hong Kong (12-18 August 1990) in preparation for the Seventh Assembly in Canberra. We need to set aside those things that are not essential to our faith and that have stood in the way of creative relationships between peoples of faith. We have come to a moment of truth. The time to speak and act is now for we share one life on the one earth.

2. The theme of our meeting was that of the Assembly, Renewal. Among us were Buddhists, Christians, Confucians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs as well as a Zoroastrian, a follower of the Shinto tradition, and a scholar of Taoism. We were enriched by hearing a Taoist, a Jew, a Sikh and a Muslim speak on the goodness of the created order and human responsibility toward all nature. We were introduced to Shinto, Buddhist, Hindu and Christian perspectives on the reconciliation of the human community. We were challenged to grapple with the Zoroastrian view of good and evil. Australian Aboriginal Christians shared with us the richness of the Aboriginal spirituality. They told us 'The land is our mother, it is our Dreaming, it is our life'. But they also opened our eyes to the persistent racism in our day and to the grave injustices committed to the Aboriginal people of Australia.

3. At no time before in history has the image of a 'global village' been so evident. A Hindu participant told us, 'We are one family. The Supreme Being granted us this gift. We belong together'. A Muslim participant reminded us, 'Biologically we all belong to one single, common species. Ecologically we are part of the one planet's biosphere. Historically we all drink and are fed from the same subterranean streams. Culturally we are becoming increasingly multinational. Spiritually we all sense that we are embarked on a common journey'. As people of faith we hold that there is but one source of life nourishing and sustaining the whole inhabited world. The modern communications revolution makes our interdependence clearer day by day. We face a common future or a common extinction.

4. In Hong Kong people of many faith traditions live together in the same place, facing the same future, with the challenging year of 1997 coming nearer. A council of six religions has been formed to meet regularly and discuss common concerns. All of us affirmed that our own life contexts as well as increasingly multireligious. A dialogue between people of many faiths is the basis of our common future.

5. We all have a rich heritage in our own faith traditions. They enable us to distinguish between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, harmony and disharmony. They tell us that human beings are guardians and trustees of this earth with no right to misuse it for greed or selfish ends. Nevertheless, we all felt that the noblest insights

of our heritage are often used in a mutually excluding way and therefore not for the common good of all human beings. Disharmony among peoples and nations increases and the lack of peace and justice is blatant. Nature is degraded and misused. Truth is compromised and disregarded. Individual lives are broken and whole communities are destroyed. The image of our neighbour is distorted. Greed and selfishness rule. We must scrutinize the forms and contents of religious education in all our traditions to see what has gone wrong and how it can be rectified.

6. The time is ripe for what in the Jewish tradition is called Teshuvah, a radical turning—repentance and renewal. From the Japanese Shinto tradition we were challenged: 'We as religious people, I believe, should repent of our ignorance and negligence and apologize to Kami, Nature and Life itself'.

7. During our time together we had a deeply moving and spiritual experience when a Christian Palestinian shared with us her search for the meaning of reconciliation and love and her struggle to act it out in the context of occupied Palestine. This initiated a painful, revealing and hopeful dialogue with the Jewish participants among us. We all experienced the great importance of speaking the truth as we see it in our own life situations and acting upon the basic commitments of our faith. The sharing process helped us to see that our truth claims are not simply ideas, but must be lived out in our whole life and in our relationships with our neighbours. We have to learn to recognize in our neighbours the presence of the divine spoken of in different ways in different traditions: the Shekhina in the Jewish tradition, the Holy Spirit of the Triune God to the Christians, the Atman to the Hindus and Sikhs.

8. Dialogue between people of living faiths is not only a theoretical and scholarly exercise in talking together. The most urgent area of dialogue is our common responsibility for the communities in which we live. In the Sikh scriptures it is said, 'Truth is above all, but over and above truth is truthful living'. It has to do with our specific commitment to the environment, to refugees, to the homeless, and to those discriminated against on caste and race. As people of faith we are increasingly aware of the sharp critique of all religions in this age of science, technology and modern communications. We are nevertheless convinced that spiritual search is intrinsic to human life and that the wisdom of all the faith traditions is needed to enlighten and at times to challenge the misuse of science and technology.

9. We therefore call upon people of all religious traditions to open themselves to a new paradigm of relationship with one another. The future calls us to a new pattern of working together and living out our faith. We must be true to our own faith traditions but in solidarity with one another, so that we can become bearers of hope for our time.

10. As a result of our multifaith dialogue in Hong Kong, we believe that this new paradigm of relationships will be built on some basic common insights:

- (a) We all live in one *oikia*, one 'household'. The *oikoumene* embraces the whole inhabited earth with all its forms of life and all its families of faith. The 'justice, peace and integrity of creation' so many long for inevitably concerns all human beings and must be sought in dialogue with people of other faiths as well as with people of no confessed faith.
- (b) In our interdependent world people of one religious tradition alone will not be able to find solutions to the ills of our time. Renewal will require the deep reflection and commitment of all of us.
- (c) We must no longer do separately that which we as people of many faiths can do together. The global problems that face us are too great and too complex for the resources we have separately.
- (d) The plurality of humankind must be affirmed and so must the diversity of gifts we offer to one another in our common life and struggles.

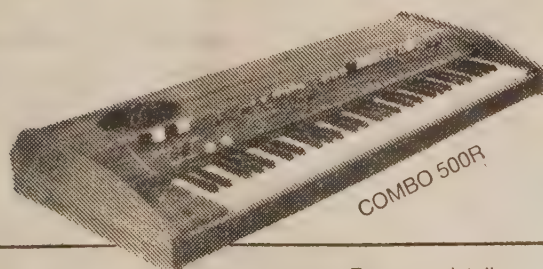
(e) Interreligious dialogue is essential to this new paradigm of relationships. Such dialogue goes beyond meetings, exchanges and encounters to the creation of what we might call a 'culture of dialogue'. This culture of dialogue begins at the local level with the very structures and forms of our daily living and leads us to common action and toward a common future.

As we have struggled with the themes of renewal during this week, we have been deeply touched by the daily sharing of worship by participants of each of our religious traditions. We have learned much by attending one another's devotions. Our experience here in Hong Kong has led us to affirm that interreligious dialogue enriches the faith of all involved. It deepens our own faith, offers us new insights, and strengthens us in our own commitments. Indeed, interreligious dialogue is a source of renewal.

From our many faiths and diverse perspectives we have joined the search for renewal. We stand alongside the Seventh Assembly as it prays 'Come Holy Spirit, Renew the Whole Creation.'

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Spirit of Truth—Set us Free!

‘... and you will know the truth’, said Jesus, ‘and the truth will make you free’ (John 8:32). But how can we know the truth? ‘The Spirit of truth that the Father will send you will lead you into all truth’ (John 16:13).

Sin brings estrangement and alienation—from God and from other people. Sin is a state of bondage. Jesus is speaking here about the freedom that we would experience as individuals when we are liberated from the captivity of sin. We experience it as healing, forgiveness, reconciliation. Set free from sin, the Spirit restores us into communion with God and community with our neighbours.

But sin is more than individual acts of omission and commission. It is also a corporate reality, manifesting itself in our systems and structures and causing untold suffering to millions of people. Many Christians are pre-occupied with personal sin and individual salvation. That is vitally important, but we should be equally conscious of societal sin which causes widespread poverty and leads to wars, to the destruction of life and land and to the divisions and discriminations that people are experiencing at many levels today. The ecumenical movement has always given serious attention to such structural sin and the church’s role in combating it.

In dealing with this issue we need to take account of the many areas of life where people are in bondage and cry out for freedom. God’s intervention in history in the story of Exodus to free the people from oppression is at the heart of the Old Testament. Jesus’ refusal to compromise with the powers of the day, whether religious or secular, and his total willingness to stand for the truth have inspired Christians down the centuries.

We live at a time of rapid changes in international relations. The apparent end of the cold war, new moves towards disarmament, the advent of democratically elected governments in many countries, the possible dismantling of apartheid, and rapid political changes in the erstwhile communist states of Europe have all happened so rapidly that we are not yet able to assess their significance to our witness.

Six issues, related to these and other situations in which we find ourselves, have been identified in this area as deserving the attention of the assembly. Churches in different parts of the world should add to them their own concerns as they call upon the Spirit of truth to set them free.

Issue 1 : The challenge to be free in order to struggle

The Spirit liberates men and women and empowers them to participate in God’s work. The church, convinced that it is the bearer of the gospel, feels called to proclaim the offer of new life to the world.

But many people do not see the renewal and new beginning in Christ as a self-evident need. Several social forces press for passivity and conformity. Anonymity and marginalization tend to reduce the possibilities for making personal decisions. The prospect of the manipulation of human genes in laboratories threatens to diminish human life, which can then be thought of as no more than a combination of chemical substances. Similarly, socio-economic structures often tend to reduce the goal of human life to the consumption of material goods. The over-emphasis on productivity and efficiency sometimes results in a distortion of values and an undermining of relationships.

There indeed are forces that work against and factors that argue against the transformation of structures. And it is tempting to confine our interest to personal conversion and changes at the individual level. But our inner freedom should give us the courage to engage in outer struggles. In fact some would see the degree of our commitment to the struggle for the total liberation of humankind and of all creation as the test of our inner freedom.

Questions for discussion

1. The invitation for conversion and transformation is offered to the rich and the poor alike. It applies to all classes, races and sexes. But does it mean that all human differences become irrelevant in the light of our experience of conversion?
2. What is the need to tell the story of Jesus as we are engaged in the struggle for liberation? What role can that story play in our struggles?
3. How may the renewal of the church contribute to the overall liberation of peoples?
4. How can the liberative experience of individuals contribute to the transformation of society?

Issue 2 : The challenge to evolve sustainable value systems

The Spirit calls us to life in community. Such life in community is expressed in social, economic and political terms. In the political and economic fields we today witness in many countries the disintegration of one of the dominant systems—communism. It is often pointed out that communism was discredited because of excessive centralization and consequent inefficiency and decline in living standards, state repression and the encroachment on human freedom, its intolerance of dissent and religious belief.

The other dominant system is the capitalist one with its ‘free market’ economic model. While many see

the downfall of communism as a vindication of the free market, others warn against the current easy euphoria. The latter are concerned over the wide disparity between and within nations that mark the capitalist system. Urban poverty, homelessness, deprivation and unemployment are prevalent features of many capitalist nations. The debt crisis and the continued economic dependence of so many nations on a powerful few are perceived as the consequence of an unchecked market system. According to its critics the free market is not really free but controlled, manipulated and maintained for the benefit of a privileged few. They question the subordination of human needs to market forces and the social costs of the free enterprise system.

In this situation people in both ideological camps have begun to look for authentic values and systems that should be preserved and fostered in our economic and social life. The ecumenical movement has always insisted that economic and political questions are also theological issues insofar as they have to do with human relations. If we confess the Spirit as the Spirit of truth, what is the nature of truth that we should seek in our political and economic life?

Questions for discussion

1. Are you aware of attempts at developing economic models which emphasize social values? What contributions can Christians bring to the search for new values and to the attempts to embody them in actual models?
2. How can the church help its members to undertake the kind of social analysis and theological reflection that will equip them to effectively participate in this search?
3. What are some of the enduring and just values that the churches should uphold in the present context?

Issue 3 : The challenge to work for racial justice

The Spirit of truth exposes what is wrong and evil in society (John 16 : 18). One of the terrible wrongs on which the ecumenical movement has always taken an uncompromising stand is racism. Since 1928, when the International Missionary Council met in Jerusalem, it has condemned racism as sin against God and humanity.

Racism militates against the community that the Spirit promises to all humankind. There are hopeful signs today that apartheid in South Africa may be dismantled, but racism is rampant in many other parts of the world also. Racially motivated violence is once again on the increase and policies of racial exclusion and intolerance are again coming into force, as is evident in recent legislation in quite a few countries on immigration, nationality laws, etc. Neo-fascist groups have begun to emerge once again in some of the European countries.

Discrimination is increasingly practised also on the basis of the ethnic or national origin of peoples. All these call for a wider discussion of racism-related issues. Of particular concern is the plight of indigenous peoples in many countries. Their cultures are looked down upon and their land, including sacred sites, taken over for so-called development.

In what ways can our confession that the Spirit liberates us influence our attitude to racism?

Questions for discussion

1. Education and training for racism-awareness are an important aspect of the struggle against racism.

How and in what form may they be undertaken in your community?

2. The year 1992 marks the 500th anniversary of the colonization of the Americas, and it has been suggested that the churches should observe it as a year of systematic action to combat racism. What symbolic acts of solidarity will enable us and others to become aware of the wrongs of history and to correct them in meaningful ways?
3. In what ways can we be involved in the struggle for racial justice in partnership with the oppressed?
4. The churches themselves are not exempt from the evil of racism. How may we set our own house in order?

Issue 4 : The challenge of communication for liberation

Communication helps shape people's attitudes and behaviour. It is power. With the advances in communication technology, however, that power is becoming increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few. It is used to curb rather than promote the freedom of peoples and nations. How can the churches help in this situation? How can it promote truth-telling, advocacy, and participation in and through communication?

Many parts of the world are at the threshold of a new culture, a culture dominated by television, increasingly 'deregulated', that is, determined by real or perceived consumer demands. TV and other mass media are increasingly used to market cultural products which are treated as commodities; they do not serve as a system of public information, education and entertainment.

Communication technologies, especially satellites, have made it possible to market cultural products on a global scale. In fact the profitability of TV and the music industry is only possible because of its international market. The same is true for other newer developments in communication, particularly computers and the transfer of data of all kinds. Both computer technology and the production of programmes (from television to computers) are controlled by a very few companies in a very few countries in the North Atlantic region and Japan. The values and worldviews of these countries condition the content and determine priorities in technology.

In other parts of the world, however, the majority of the population, as in rural Africa, is almost totally unaffected by the mass media, which are the prerogative of the urban rich. While nations in the West, and a few in South East Asia, have an over-abundance of mass communication and communication technologies, many countries of the south do not even have the telecommunication infrastructure which is necessary to enable a modern democratic nation to function well. The telephone is a case in point. The city of Tokyo has more telephone connections than the whole of sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa). The manifold advantages that the public telephone has brought to rural areas are well documented, and exceed, for example, the use of television.

The New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), promulgated by UNESCO and endorsed by all governments of the world in 1980, called for the democratization of communication both internationally and within each country. It championed the role of communication as a public service rather than as an industry. It called for a more effective control of the mass media by citizens' action groups and for a more equal distribution of communication power in the world. But NWICO did not take off.

The problems remain, however, and become even more pressing and intricate. The churches' own programmes of communication, no matter how small, could become models for truth-telling, advocacy and people's participation.

Truth-telling : What are the issues and events which the media avoid? And what kinds of disinformation are spread by both governments and media which need to be addressed and corrected?

Advocacy : The churches have a duty to act, publicly, in defence of the oppressed, exploited and marginalized. These people have no public voice. In most cases they are silenced by both governments and mass media. Church related media could be their champions.

Participation : There is a need for church leaders to make their views known through the mass media. But there is an equal need for people's voices to be heard. And heard directly, rather than through intermediaries. In thousands of experiments in 'alternative communication' it has been proved that people can speak for themselves.

Questions for discussion

1. How has communication been revolutionized in your country through the new technology? Does it serve human liberation and the cause of justice?
2. What ethical principles would we as consumers of mass media wish to prescribe for modern journalism?
3. How can we create media awareness among people? What are the values we want the media to promote?
4. What practical steps can we take to encourage truth-telling, advocacy and participation?

Issue 5 : The challenge to work for lasting peace and meaningful security

Our times have been marked by persistent conflicts. The cold war period saw the proliferation of nuclear weapons, based on the theory of deterrence. Despite the efforts of the United Nations, a number of wars have been waged in many parts of the world, wars of liberation, civil wars, border disputes between neighbouring states which grew into full-fledged wars, overt and covert conflicts that killed men, women and children and laid waste vast areas of land.

There are signs of change : moves towards disarmament, more willingness on the part of states to negotiate peaceful solutions, and less support for or sponsorship of conflict situations around the world, pressure on the superpowers to remove troops from foreign territories and bring about reductions in defence expenditure.¹

But the perception of power as the capacity to wage wars and to impose the will of one nation on another remains in force. And security continues to be understood in terms of the ability to strike back and destroy. There is indeed a fundamental issue of values at the heart of the war and peace question.

Militarization drains the resources of nations and distorts development priorities. Its consequences are devastating for children, youth and family. The number of refugees who flee situations of conflicts is increasing at an alarming rate. War generates industries that can survive only by making more and more efficient weapons of destruction.

The churches need to do much more to expose the absurdity of dependence on war for security in a nuclear age. They should promote new models of thinking about public policy and planning which are not based on the understanding of power in terms of the capacity to wage wars. The devastation that war brings to social life, to the life of the planet and to the stratosphere should become an important part of a new discussion on security based on rights and the rule of law.

Questions for discussion

1. What contributions can Christians make towards a better understanding of peace and the legitimate search for security?
2. Peace movements have been operating primarily in the first-world countries and have focused on nuclear disarmament. There are, however, wider movements now of peace churches, and of Christians who refuse to pay taxes towards military spending and oppose militarization in other ways. How can such movements be promoted also in third-world countries so that governments may be persuaded to utilize national resources for human development?
3. How may the intervention of the World Council of Churches in international affairs contribute to promote a new value system?

Issue 6 : Justice for women

The movement for the liberation of women from patriarchal values and systems has gathered strength and momentum in our time. Among the stories of oppression, that of the oppression of women is the longest, the most universal and perhaps the most harrowing. It is a story of the discrimination, subordination and exploitation of women *as women* that cuts across class, race, creed and nationality. A WCC-sponsored study on female sexuality and religion identified patriarchal values as being at the root of the oppression of women right across cultures and religions. The struggle of women against this age-old oppression is integrally related to the total struggle against racism and economic exploitation. Very often women experience a triple oppression; they are the victims of racism and classism, and of sexism.

Our confession of the Holy Spirit as the One who bestows on the community the gifts it needs for its total upbuilding raises a number of questions in relation to the place of women in the life of the church. It is important to recall that church teachings have often given a secondary place to women, and prescribed for them a submissive role. Their gifts have been consistently underused in the life and ministry of the church. The Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women is an attempt to help the churches to face some of these issues.

Questions for discussion

1. What elements in theology, tradition and biblical interpretation have been used to reinforce the stereotypes which keep women in subjugation?
2. What values need to be emphasized to prevent violence against women, including domestic violence?
3. How can the church's understanding of its faith practice be reinterpreted so that women can bring all their gifts and talents to the life of the church?

'Give Me Your Unconditional Love'

REV. RODERICK HEWITT,*

Have you ever seen the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*? If you have, then you may remember the scene between Tevye and Golde, when he asked her the heart searching question 'Do you love me?' This caused her to stop and think. They had experienced twenty-five years of marriage without that question ever being asked before.

'Do you love me?' This is still an explosive question today which commands attention and response from all who are involved in relationships. It is asked by close friends, courting couples, wives and husbands, children and parents. Each person seeking to discover from the other, 'how important am I to you in our relationship?'

The singing group, Musical Youth with Donna Summers, echo the crying request of many people who want to be sure of where they stand in the lives of others, with the words of their song, 'Give me your unconditional love..'

The answer given can help to either deepen or destroy trust and commitment. It determines whether a confused child runs away from home, or stays due to the reassurance of his parent's love. It also decides the fate of many who are experiencing material problems. This question about the loyalty of love is so important in our society. It has the power to influence the ratings of T. V. soaps, it can decide which newspaper wins the circulation war and which film makes it to the box office.

According to our reading from John's gospel, Jesus asked this question of one of his closest friends, Simon Peter. It happened by the sea of Tiberias very early one morning after Peter and his fishing companions had experienced a night of fruitless labour, when they had caught nothing. When Jesus appeared amongst them, the disciples experienced the miracle of the caring love of

Christ when they obeyed his words and cast their nets on the right side of the boat.

After they had brought their nets ashore, they sat down on the beach to eat with Jesus. Then, without any prior warning Jesus said to Peter three times 'Do you love me?' For him there was no escape. It was a direct question about the quality of love and loyalty he was prepared to give as a disciple.

It must have been quite an upsetting experience for Peter. To be asked three times suggests that Jesus doubted the love that Peter was prepared to give. Peter would have understood why his love was being publicly tested before all his friends. How could he forget his previous three painful denials of Jesus during his trial before the high priest. At that time Peter's love failed the test when it was so badly needed. His first thought was to protect his own security.

'Do you love me loyally Peter?' He replied, 'Lord you know I love you'. That is a good answer but not good enough! When love asks about loyalty it expects assurances not only in words but also in actions. That is why Jesus said to Peter 'feed my sheep'. It was just another way of saying 'if you love me then show me with your actions'. Prove your love by taking on the responsibility of caring for others.

A relationship cannot function properly on a lukewarm commitment. The insipidness of its taste would nullify the power of love. Even though we often fail those close to us with our love, God's love for us is faithful. He has already taken the initiative to demonstrate the quality of his love for all of us. He is prepared to stand by the door of our lives and knock, risking the shame of being rejected. However, the final responsibility for any relationship with God is with us. Ultimately, it is we who must decide whether we will open or close the privacy of our lives to the transforming power of God's love.

* Rev. Roderick is the Secretary for Education in Mission of C.W.M., London.

—Newshare



Sermon Outlines for April 1991

7-4-1991 Next After Easter

MY LORD AND MY GOD

Bible Lessons :

Zephaniah 3, 14-20 1 John 5, 1-12
Psalms 93 John 20, 19-31
2 Kings 6, 8-23 John 11, 17-44

My Lord and my God were the words uttered by Thomas, one of the disciples of Jesus Christ. After the resurrection, when Jesus appeared to the disciples, Thomas was not there and he expressed his doubt about Jesus' resurrection. He wanted to touch the body of Jesus and verify it. After eight days Jesus appeared again to His disciples and invites Thomas to touch his hands and wounds and become a believer. That was context in which Thomas at once acknowledged Jesus as the Lord and God. Note Jesus did not allow Mary Magdalene to touch Him in the garden as she never expressed her doubt (Jn. 20, 17).

I

Lord in the Old Testament usually represents the Hebrew word *adon*, the primary meaning of which is 'ruler' or 'commander'; cf. Gen. 45, 8. It also means the master of a slave (Gen. 24). When the proper name of the God of Israel, written JHVH, became, 'the ineffable name', which might not be uttered, *adonai* was spoken instead when the scriptures were read in public worship. The Greek word *kurios* also means ruler, one having authority. Rarely it is used in the New Testament in such expressions as 'Lord of the harvest' (Matt. 9, 38); Lord of Sabbath (Mk. 2, 28). Very often it means the master of a slave.

By calling Jesus as the Lord, Thomas accepts Him as his ruler and the master. We can see his total submission to the power of the resurrected Jesus.

II

Thomas also acknowledges Jesus as God, an open confession. It is essential to realize that according to the Bible the knowledge of God is not reached by abstract speculation, but in the actual everyday business of living. God is known not by thinking out ideas about him, but by seeking and doing his will as made known to us by prophetic men and by our own consciousness of right and wrong (cf. Jn. 7, 17; Jas. 1, 27; 1 Jn. 4, 7 to 12). Essentially of a piece with this knowledge of God which comes to us in our encounter with his moral law in everyday life is the deeper insights of the prophets, by which the distinctively biblical understanding of God is brought to us; the significance of the work of the prophet is that they deepen, clarify and articulate our knowledge of God's purpose.

Thomas acknowledgement was based on his experience.
(a) Jesus is God, the Creator (b) Jesus is the Lord, the

ruler. This confession transformed Thomas which made him truly a disciple of Jesus, never doubted Him again but lived for Him.

14-4-1991 Second after Easter

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Bible Lessons

Ezekiel 34, 11-16 1 Pet. 2, 18-25
Psalm 23 John 10, 7-18
Jeremiah 23, 1-8 Luke 15, 1-7

Shepherd is the term which describes the functions of the ministry emphasizing the aspect of *responsible authority*. 'Poimeen' (Shepherd, pastor) means 'to tend or feed as a shepherd. In Acts 20, 28 we read, 'the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (episcopos) to feed the Church of God . . . clearly indicates the ministry of the Shepherd.

The Christian ministry derives its essential nature directly from the person and work of Jesus Christ. The whole priestly and sacrificial system of Judaism was abrogated by its fulfilment in Christ's priesthood and sacrifice. As we read in the early portions of the Epistle, we notice that in New Testament already the priestly language is used of the Church as a whole (1 Pet. 2, 9).

The Old Testament lesson begins with these words 'Lord God says, I will both search my sheep and seek them out . . . I will feed my flock in a good pasture . . . (Eze. 34). This thought is being continued throughout the Book. David sings it beautifully in Psalm twenty-third. The idea receives an excellent treatment to portray the qualities of God as a shepherd, caring for his sheep.

Jesus not only continues the idea but also adds something extra. (i) He calls himself as the 'door of the sheep', the safe entrance to go to a good pasture. One has to find the real door or the way that leads him or her to life eternal, a safe place, a quality of good life, a continued life. (ii) He calls himself as the good shepherd. (a) He knows his sheep (b) He can call them by name (c) Sheep response to his voice, the call (d) Sheep, thus called, gather at one place, an impeccable unity. (iii) Jesus says, I lay down my life for the sheep. How often He is risking his life for our sake. Ministry is a risky affair.

Peter is commissioned in John 21, 16 to feed or tend Christ's sheep. The pastoral oversight to be exercised by the Christian ministry is thus closely associated with our Lord's own office as shepherd and overseer of his people. Peter after he became a shepherd following the footsteps of Jesus, confidently says, you were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls (1 Pet. 2, 25 Authorized version). The aim of Christian shepherd is to turn the flocks to Jesus.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Bible Lessons

Isaiah 60, 15-19
Psalms 36, 5-9
Zechariah 14, 1-7

2 Corinthians 4, 1-6
John 9, 1-11
Acts 9, 1-9

In the Bible the words *Light* and *darkness* are used in figurative sense. When we read, for instance, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all, we understand this as a figure of speech; the meaning is that God is altogether good, without any tincture of evil. But for the writers the words were also true in their literal sense; in His very essence God is light—light in the simple physical sense of the word. So of the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, we are told that 'there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light (Rev. 22, 5).

The Old Testament lesson asserts this aspect that God is light and goes on to say that this *light* is the glory of the heavens. '... the Lord shall be unto thee an ever-burning light, and thy God thy glory (Isa. 60, 19). In the Old Testament *light* and *darkness*, when used figuratively, usually mean prosperity and happiness, and adversity and sorrow, e.g. Esther 8, 16. Also see Genesis 1, 5, 20; Isaiah 45, 6 & 7.

In the New Testament there are the usual figurative uses of the two words. 'What fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness? ... (2 Cor. 6, 12). It is remarkable how seldom, either in the O.T. or the N.T., *darkness* means simply ignorance, and *light* knowledge and understanding.

In the religious thought of the first century our era God was often conceived in terms of light and the power of light in terms of darkness. To this way of thinking many influences from ancient sun-worship onwards contributed; notable among these were the religion of Zoroaster and the philosophy of Plato. It comes to clearest and fullest expression, in the Gospel and the first Epistle of John. 'God is light'. Christ declares that he himself is the light of the world (Jn. 9, 5). This is the *light* which gives radiance to His followers or believers to shine like lights in the world to help people see the darkness in which they are groping and help them to come out such darkness to enter the true light—*thamasoma jyothirgamaya*—from darkness into light.

THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE

Bible Lessons

Proverbs 4, 10-18
Psalms 119, 9-16
Isaiah 30, 19-26

1 John 1, 1-4
John 14, 1-11
John 16, 1-15

Man/woman, from time in memorial has been searching for a way that would lead him or her to eternal life. Being confused with so many teachings he has been wanting to know the real truth and it has been everybody's desire to have eternal life.

There are in the Old Testament passages which indicate an awareness of the fact that man has open to him the possibility of a life which is higher than the physical life, a life which is nourished not by bread as is the body but by the self-communication of God to his people signified by the utterance of his Word. The phrase 'living God', which occurs quite frequently in O.T., marks contrast between the true God whose reality is known by his acts and the dumb idols which do not see or hear or speak (1 Sam. 17, 36; 1 Kings 18, 26-29; 1 Thess. 1, 9) (ii) God is called living God not only as the creator but as the Restorer of life (Ps. 42, 2). (iii) the phrase describes the providence of God. His ceaseless watchfulness, guiding and correcting, his care for the individual life even to the numbering of the very hairs of one's head and without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground (II Sam. 14, 11; Ps. 18, 46; Matt. 10, 29-30).

In the Gospels the phrase occurs only twice and both times a crucial messianic passage (Matt. 16, 16; 26, 63), where the attention of the reader is concentrated on the thought that the purpose of God depends on Jesus and his faithfulness. He is the faithful remnant through whom the living God will recreate Israel. This thought is linked up with the decisive self-communication of God which man must receive to find his true life, with the Word of God uttered fully in the person of Jesus Christ. (See Heb. 3, 12; 9, 14) Thus in the presence of Jesus, men are in the presence of living God (Jn. 1, 3-4).

Jesus, when he said, 'I am the way, the truth and the life, (Jn. 14, 6), he became indispensable to all true human life. The disciples acknowledge this in the words of their spokesman (Jn. 6, 68): 'thou hast the words of eternal life', which means not description of life hereafter but words which are living and effective to create and sustain eternal life. Christians are to have life in his name (Jn. 20, 31) by entering into a real and living relationship with him.



Chinese Dissident Recognizes Christ as Highest Moral Standard

PARIS.—The prominent Chinese dissident, Yen Jiaqi, who plays a leading role in democratic movement among Chinese students, said he recognized in God and Christ the highest moral standards for human life, but did not agree that if China is to achieve democracy it needs to espouse Christianity.

Yen was the main speaker at a church-organized seminar, at St. Peter Lutheran Church here. Over 40 persons, most of whom students and recent arrivals from People's Republic of China, attended the discussion on the general theme, 'God, human nature and the gospel'.

Yen spoke on the subject of conscience and human freedom in relation to God and human nature. A participant described his speech as 'unique' because of the place he gave to 'conscience'.

Yen said that the fundamental difference between obedience to God and the dictator is that 'obedience to God merely requires people to listen to the voice of his own conscience'.

But obedience to the dictator 'demands the subversion of one's conscience so as to act in compliance to the dictator's commands unconditionally,' he said.

After 90 minutes of presentations and discussions, the chairperson, the Rev. Nathaniel Hsieh Wei-Chung, prolonged the seminar for another hour, given the interest expressed by Yen and the majority of those present for further discussions.

'There were those, who, like Yen, stated they were not church members, but that they recognized in God and Christ the highest moral standards for human life,' observed the Rev. Anders Hanson, a speaker and former Evangelical Lutheran Church in America missionary to China.

'Still they took exception to the contention that if China is to achieve democracy it needs to espouse Christianity,' Hanson said. 'The question was posed: What about China's own religions. Can't they provide the needed moral force on which to build a democratic society?'

The organizer, Hsieh is pastor of the newly formed Loving Shepherd Chinese Lutheran Church in Paris. He voiced his hope that the forum discussion could be the beginning of further discussion sessions on pertinent topics. His church uses St. Peter's facilities to serve the ethnic Chinese community here.

Hong Kong Christians Silent March

Christians here joined tens of thousands of citizens at the candlelight vigil Jun. 4 at a public park to commemorate the first anniversary of the Massacre of pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in Beijing last June.

About 3,000 Christians took a silent march in the downtown district before they went to the park. Only a few of them sang hymns.

Dr. Philemon Choi, a leader of the Hong Kong Christian Patriotic and Democratic Movement, said that the silence symbolized their remembrance of the tragedy last year and hope for more freedom and democracy in China.

The movement was formed last year by a group of Christian pastors and lay leaders in the wake of the democracy activities in Beijing.

Many Christians were in yellow T-shirts and some wore white headbands. They said yellow represented hope and faith for the future of China.

On the same day, more than 1,400 local Christians and 13 Christian organizations signed a public statement to pledge their 'love of China'. 'The fate of China is the same as ours. . . . We'll try our best to promote democratization in China,' the statement says.

Despite the growing fear and worries for the future, they are committed to the stability of Hong Kong and should play 'an active role in the process of democratization in China'.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) will recover sovereignty of Hong Kong, a British colony, in mid-1997. Many people, including Christians, have emigrated to the fear of the future Communist rule, especially after last year's massacre in Beijing.

The memorial activities surprised many observers because recently PRC officials charged Hong Kong 'counter-revolutionary base' due to the massive support of China's pro-democracy activities and condemnation of the June 4 tragedy.

The mainline Protestant churches here maintained a low profile on the anniversary activities, which marked a sharp contrast of their immediate reactions last year.

Few church leaders explained that individual prayers for a better future of China and Hong Kong at the Pentecost Sunday (June 3) services would be enough memorial ceremonies during this 'sensitive' time of transition.

TAIPEI—A memorial service for the victims of last year's June 4 massacre of pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in Beijing was held here by Protestant pastors and lay leaders, June 2. Speakers at the service urged Christians in both Taiwan and mainland China to play together for the future of China and continue evangelization work in both places, according to Christian Tribune, a Protestant weekly in Taiwan.

WASHINGTON—In the People's Republic of China, 48 Catholics and 13 Protestant leaders are now in prison or under house arrest, according to a lay Catholic human rights group here. The Puebla Institute reported that there has been 'a worsening pattern of repression against religious believers' in China. The institute sent a letter June 1 to Zhu Quzhen, the Chinese ambassador to the United States, citing 61 cases of such repression. 'We are concerned that these individuals are being denied the fundamental right of worshiping according to the dictates of their conscience,' said Nina Shea, president of the Puebla Institute.

SYDNEY—An Anglican counselling organization has praised the Australian government's decision to grant

0,000 Chinese students automatic residency which will help and not hinder their economic situation and that of Australia.' The Anglican Home Mission Society reported at counselling service has been provided for an average of 70 students a week since the Tiananmen square massacre last year. Many Chinese were 'unduly exploited' by employers. A young Chinese man who was a mathematics tutor in China was underpaid by a restaurant owner and others turned to prostitution.

CENTRAL CHINA—Protestant churches that are not affiliated to the official Three-self Patriotic Movement, or house churches, in central China are facing tightened surveillance by authorities, according to a recent report from the Hong Kong-based Chinese Church Research Centre. Among other ways of crackdown, house church members are forced to take political classes which have taken place since February. Other church leaders were detained by police, beaten or whipped. But local believers are more fervent than ever. They are still active in evangelization work, the report said.

COLOMBO—Buddhist high priests in Sri Lanka recently opposed the breeding of animals for consumption, sale or export which they said violates Buddhist precepts. Their statement has forced the government to scale down a publicity campaign which encourages Sri Lankans to eat fresh water fish to increase protein in their diet. Stopping inland fisheries would also help curtail violence and manslaughter in the country, a recent appeal by the high priests to the president said.

KUALA LUMPUR—Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed has assured non-Muslims in Malaysia that Islam will not be forced on them. He said the government has no intention of 'depriving non-Muslims of their rights, particularly in matters of religion.' His statement followed concern expressed by the Buddhist-Christian-Hindu-Sikh Malaysian Consultative Council about a law passed in Selangor state which makes it legal for non-Muslims to convert to Islam at age 15 for boys or at the onset of menstruation for girls, makes it compulsory for minor children to become Muslims if one of their parents does. About half of the 17.5 million people in Malaysia are Muslims. Buddhist, Hindus and Christians make up 17, 7 and 6 per cent of the population respectively.

Ecumenical training for women

Bangladesh

The last two years in Bangladesh have seen the setting up of a new venture designed to promote leadership training for women and to do it on an ecumenical basis. Under the directorship of Mukti Barton, a member of Church of England and gathering together representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, the Bangladesh Baptist Church and the National Council of churches the group lists objectives:

- To instil in all Christian women the awareness that women and men are created equally in the image of God.
- To give positive moral and spiritual support to women to enable them to arrive at their own theological understanding of their value in Christianity, looking particularly at the example of Jesus and his revolutionary attitudes and behaviour towards women and the response of women to Jesus.

- To try to come to the understanding of the cultural context of the scriptures and to relate them to women's own everyday experience, especially the experience of injustice and inequality.
- To develop solidarity among women across church divisions.
- To make Christian worship in Bangladesh more culturally relevant.
- To establish the connection between life and theology with the help of dialogue, case studies, stories, drama, art, music and dance.
- To provide a counselling centre where individual women may have the opportunity to come to share their life experiences, questions and troubles.
- To attempt by joint women's action to stop all kinds of women's oppression and discrimination in families, church and society.

Since its opening in October 1988 several workshops have been held and it is hoped that more will take place both in the centre and at village level. As Mukti Barton writes, 'It is difficult to give a dream concrete shape but it is exciting to see a dream taking form here in Bangladesh. It is encouraging to see unity and solidarity and understanding of their spiritual and human values already beginning to grow among the women who are participating in the programme.' This is the first time such an ecumenical form has grown up in Bangladesh.

FIRST WOMAN MINISTER

Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwe Synod of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa ordained its first woman minister on Saturday 13th January 1990 when Joyce Mary Childs DPhil was admitted to the Christian ministry. She is serving the Eastlea Congregational Church in Harare, where she has been active for many years and served her probation period.

Dr. Childs arrived in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) in October 1949 as a London Missionary Society missionary assigned to work as a primary school teacher at the Hope Fountain Mission. (Hope Fountain Mission was established by the LMS in 1870 and the church there is one of the active circuits within the Synod to this day.)

She was an active member of the local church at Hope Fountain for 17 years, later serving as a teacher trainer at the Hope Fountain Teacher Training School under the then principal, W McDonald Partridge.

In her own statement, Dr. Childs described three 'strands' which had influenced her call to ministry: the impact of the church in London where she grew up (she explained it has 'produced' six ministers and at least three missionaries to her knowledge); her profession as a teacher, teacher trainer, and government education officer until her recent retirement; and her 'deep friendship with Christians of this and other denominations and countries, as part of the wider church of God.'

—Newshare



BOOK REVIEW

Women Before God. Author Lavinia Byrne, SPCK 1988, £4.95. Review by Paula Oxley.

'I entered a convent at the age of seventeen. Only over the last five years has the search for God had political overtones; only over the last five years have I allowed myself to feel the pain of being a woman in the Roman Catholic communion; only over the last five years have I begun to search for God within this experience.' So writes Lavinia Byrne. In this book we can discover some of the fruits of that search and it will surely speak to all who are searching for God in their experience, men as well as women.

It will be clear from the above that this is not just another book of feminist theology, but one which helps us to take a fresh look at our identity as believers and how we may grow as believers. It is a book of spirituality which explores how each of us, and women in particular, can grow in the knowledge and love of God. With this purpose in mind the book is set out in two parts, the first part concentrates on our identity as believers and the second on the development of our personal spirituality and the presence of Christian women in the world and in the Churches.

Lavinia Byrne speaks of her gratitude to the feminists for opening her eyes to certain issues and problems but explains that she cannot be a feminist since one of the consequences of such a movement is that women have been forced to define their identity in ways which lead them to deny that identity.

'The Christian feminist is apparently being asked to change, to become something different again, as though to be a woman is not good enough.'

This book proclaims that to be a woman is very good and invites women to choose to live as Christian women as fully as possible. For Lavinia Byrne what is at issue is not power-sharing or women claiming their rights but the celebration of the identity and experience of believing women.

The book begins by examining the way in the language is used in church and argues that by failing to name women it excludes them and most of what they do. It does not allow them to celebrate their identity or to reflect on the place of God in their experience, since every name we use also describes ourselves and the relationship that exists between ourselves and God.

Next Lavinia Byrne invites us to consider how the Church has imitated the world in describing women according to sexual stereotypes, something which for her has to be confronted at the level of faith. For her the danger is that we end up stereotyping God's behaviour too, since not only is man not the normative human being but a male God is not the normative God.

In a chapter on ministry, we are challenged to consider that Christian ministry is first of all about presence and only secondly about doing things. The God in whose image we are made finds fuller expression in ministry shared by both women and men than in partial and clerical ministry. The first part concludes with an exploration of

what it means to celebrate sacraments and inevitably asks the question:

'Where the Churches refuse ordination to women where they say of women that they are unordained, what are they saying about God and what are they saying about women?'

The second half of the book develops further the themes and insights of the first so that the very structure of the book illustrates Lavinia Byrne's contention that development can best be understood as spiral rather than linear. She explodes the myths of the Christian as self-denial or as self-realisation, seeing the way forward in self-acceptance.

This means accepting women's experience of development as a legitimate way to God. A chapter on believing and praying woman encourages the woman disciple to live freely out of her own experience. By her living out of incarnation she will be enabled to carry the news of resurrection into the world.

Lavinia Byrne gets us to look again at the implications of being a Christian woman in the world and in the Church, challenging our preconceptions about a hierarchy of vocations and calling us to a greater inventiveness and creativity in response to God's call. Finally we are invited into alternative images of Christian priesthood which can lead to a fuller understanding of God as the one who nurtures and empowers. In this perspective it is lay women who should be role models for women priests, rather than the other way round. Women priests would then be those who express publicly that what we do in the church is about service rather than servitude.

The author makes no apology for writing as a Roman Catholic and a nun at that. By sharing from her own experience she encourages us to reflect on our own so that no reader should feel unable to relate to what she says. Lavinia Byrne's style is very fluent, making her easy and enjoyable to read. This book should, however, be read slowly to allow it the consideration it deserves. I like the vivid pictures to which she treats us, for example the sacrament of ordination as a rugby ball 'which people, well men, pass to each other'. Her use of the 'stereotypical nun' to illustrate the different callings valid for women is highly memorable. For me the meditations on the stories of Jairus' daughter and the woman with the haemorrhage and the reflections on the sacraments were particularly meaningful.

This is a book for any woman or man who is willing to own their feelings and accept that they can come to God through the natural and human. Through its pages the women and men will begin to discover themselves as people whom God has made and whom God finds good.

Reading this book lifted my heart and made me glad again to be a woman, to sense that 'woman is not something to be ashamed of but something to be rejoiced in'.

I hope many men will dare to read it.

—PAULA OXLEY

MARCH 1991

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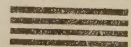
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